

## **Executive Summary**

Bear Lake County is located in the extreme southeast corner of Idaho (Appendix A: Figure 1). This mountainous region maintains within its' borders Federal, State and Private lands that are susceptible to wildfire. For the last 40 years, Bear Lake County has been attracting an increasing number of recreational visitors. The recreational housing market has followed suit with significant development on lands at the interface between wildland regions administered by the Forest Service/BLM and Bear Lake County. As the number of homes and visitors increase so does the potential for fires and their inherent risks. The core fire season starts July 15 and terminates October 31. This window of time can vary upon winter snowpack, timing and release of snowpack and summer precipitation.

Occurrence of wildfires in the assessment area, both natural and human caused, is relatively low because of the long winter and cool moist summer that are normal for this area. However, increased weekend and recreational population will exacerbate current fire conditions leading to an increased risk of wildland fire. During a 21- year period, 1980-2001, 115 wildland fires occurred burning 6,818 acres within the county (Appendix A: Figure 2). In addition the county fire department suppressed an additional 30 fires per year. Of the 115 federally suppressed fires. 50% were lightning-caused and of the human-caused fires 25% can be related directly to camping activities.

The purpose of this plan is to identify and prioritize those regions within the county which pose the greatest risk of damage based on the priorities established. Those areas within the county that pose the greatest risk are identified on the ownership map in red (Appendix A: Figure 3). These areas are the highest risk based on the following criteria:

- Access
- Water
- Road grades and widths
- Population density
- Fuels

Identification of high risk regions in the county will provide Federal, State and Local leaders guidance on areas to focus and methods of mitigation to reduce fuels and enhance the safety and well being of landowners.

The proposal of the Bear Lake County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan is to provide Bear Lake County residents, public and private organizations with assistance and recommendations to reduce risk and hazards presented by wildfires within Bear Lake County. Action items are directed to wildfire and mitigation and, as appropriate, mitigation of natural hazards.

## Wildfire Plan Development and Organization

The Bear Lake County Wildland Fire Mitigation Plan will tier to the Idaho State Implementation Strategy for the National Fire Plan. Development and review of the plan was accomplished by the Bear Lake County Wildfire Group (BLCWG)

Participation in the BLCWG included representatives from:

- Bear Lake County Commissioners
- Bear Lake County Planning and Zoning
- Bear Lake County Volunteer Fire Department
- Idaho Bureau of Disaster Services
- Idaho Department of Lands
- Homeowners Associations
- County Residents and Landowners
- Bureau of Land Management, Upper Snake River District
- USDA Forest Service

Public participation was accomplished by distribution of questionnaires that address wildfire concerns and suggestions, website posting of the plan and space for community comments, participation by homeowners associations and information from community hazard identification and mitigation reports conducted within Bear Lake County by the Bear Lake Regional Commission for the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in 2004. Draft copies of the plan were posted on the county internet site and at the courthouse for review.

## Bear Lake County Wildland Fire Plan Objective

The objective of the Bear Lake County Wildfire Plan is to mitigate wildfire risk and hazard vulnerability and documenting areas of risk to wildfire hazards. Action identified to decrease wildfire risk and hazards within Bear Lake County are focused on public safety, emergency services, county infrastructure, natural resources, fish, wildlife and property protection.

## 1.0 Overview

The wildland urban interface is defined as "an area where development and wildland fuels meet at a well-defined boundary while another term, wildland/urban intermix, serves to differentiate a more specific type of area. The intermix is defined as "an area where development and wildland fuels meet with no clearly defined boundary." NFPA 299, *Standard for Protection of Life and Property from Wildfire*, 1991 edition. The leading land use agencies are responsible for reducing the accumulated fuel hazards on the lands they administer; cooperating on information and education programs; providing technical assistance; developing agreements, partnerships and relationships with municipalities and private property owners, local protection agencies, States, and other